

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

(By E. O. SELLERS, Acting Director of Sunday School Course.)

LESSON FOR DECEMBER 20.

THE ASCENSION.

LESSON TEXT—Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:1-11.
GOLDEN TEXT—He was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight—Acts 1:9.

We have now reached the final lesson of the present course in the life of Christ, next Sunday being devoted to the review. The lesson committee have selected the continuous account of this final earthly act of our Lord as given us by St. Luke, for the Book of Acts is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke (Acts 1:1). Inasmuch as this is really but one account we will consider only that found in the Acts.

I. The Proof of the Resurrection. vv. 1-8. This book of "The Acts" is a continuation of what Jesus "began to do" and gives us the record of how he continued this work by means of those "whom he had chosen" (v. 2). Following his resurrection he gave them commandments "through the Holy Spirit," viz. in the power of the Holy Spirit. A like honor rests upon every believer to hear and to obey the commands of Jesus given in the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit. The all-sufficient proof (see also I Cor. 15:4-8) was that Jesus had been seen for a period of 40 days. This is the "many infallible proofs." During that time they not alone saw the risen Lord, but conversed with him, ate with him, and had communion with him. During these days of communion he gave them his commands as to the "things concerning the kingdom of God." This entailed a burden that these commands be proclaimed in ever widening circles to the utmost bounds of the earth.

Additional Experience.
II. The Promise of the Father. vv. 4-8. The disciples were not to begin the proclamation of their message until they were fully equipped, until they had received that all essential preparation, the endowment of the Holy Spirit. Here, again, the Scriptures are to be fulfilled (Isa. 44:3; Joel 2:28; also Luke 24:49). That ten days' delay was not time lost, for time spent in preparation is never time lost. We must not suppose these men as not regenerate (John 13:10; 15:3), but as lacking an equipment necessary for the successful execution of their important task. We as believers cannot call him Lord except by the power of the Spirit (I Cor. 12:3), but we do not all have that in-filling of the Spirit which alone will enable us to render effective service. This is an additional experience, but one open to all who will honestly and intelligently seek it (see Acts 8:12, and other references). This experience is (a) commanded, "charged not to depart till, etc." (b) to be preceded by "repentance," and (c) to carry with it authority, v. 7. R. V. It does not mean, either, temporal power nor is it the prerogative of a visible church and confined to an elect few. This kingdom is a spiritual one. The program of Jesus is Spirit-filled men to be his witnesses, and to begin "at Jerusalem." A true reception of the Holy Spirit means world-wide missionary endeavor.

Presumptive Ignorance.
III. The Present Place of Jesus. vv. 5-11. Even yet the disciples failed to grasp the idea of a spiritual kingdom as evidenced by verse six. In a most emphatic way he tells them that it is not for them to know the "times and seasons which the Father hath set within his own power" (authority, v. 7, R. V.). Their power is not to be earthly, but spiritual (v. 8). It is the height of presumptive ignorance for any one to set the date of our Lord's return (Deut. 29:29). Jesus has given us explicit information on this question (Matt. 24:36), and his parables all warn us to "watch." While Jesus talked with his disciples concerning the reception of this new power and the place where they were to begin to exercise it, his feet were parted from the earth and a cloud received him from their sight as he ascended "into heaven" (Luke 24:51; I Pet. 3:22; see also Gen. 1:24; also Rev. 1:7). His parting benediction was an adjuration to a life of service not in their weakness, but in the blessed endowment of power. Yonder into heaven he had gone to prepare a place for us (John 14:2; Heb. 9:24). There he ever liveth to intercede for us (Heb. 7:25). His presence there makes us eternally secure (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). His presence in the heavens is the guarantee that we, too, shall one day be "with him" (John 12:26; Rev. 2:21). Gazing thus into the heavens, "looking unto Jesus," two men in white raiment stood by and asked them the reason for their upward looking. There is a time for gazing upward and a time to be going about the execution of the Master's commands (see ch. 7:55). Did they expect another interview? If so the answer to their question is suggested in the words of the heavenly messengers, "this Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven" (R. V.). For nearly two thousand years the church has been waiting for another interview with her risen Lord. We are looking for another Jesus, but "this same Jesus" just as he went, personally, visibly, and in "great glory." What a mockery to say that he came in 1874 or any other year, or that in 1914 he came with spiritual power, the manifestation of which is yet to be seen. Or on the other hand, if we honestly face his parables, what need that we "watch" if his coming be not till after the millennium? This promise is the great hope of the church (Titus 2:13); for that return, we are not only to be ready, but earnestly looking (Rev. 22:20).

AFRO-AMERICAN CULLINGS

Richard Holmes Allen, ninety-nine years old, who was born in Baltimore October 17, 1815, the son of Richard Allen and Jane Wilson, is thought to be the oldest colored man in Boston. He lives at 1 Hope place off North Russell street, West end.

"It was only the other day I made up my mind to tell my life story, for I wanted to wait until I was 100 years old, but everybody that comes to see me said I ought to tell it now," said Mr. Allen, who, in spite of his age, looks well, sleeps well and is without a pain or ache, except once in a great while when he has a slight attack of rheumatism.

Mr. Allen told the Globe reporter all about his war record, as well as his early life when he was very cruelly treated on a farm five miles out from the city of Baltimore. His story is as follows:

"My grandfather, grandmother and mother's two sisters were stolen from Africa and brought to Baltimore and sold in the Woodford jail. 'A sea captain by the name of George Thompson bought them and set my grandfather and grandmother free. My mother's two sisters were in the service of the captain's wife for 28 years.

"After my mother was set free I was born. My mother bound me to her mistress until I was twenty-one years old. Her mistress' name was Elizabeth Southcomb, and her husband's name was John Plummer Southcomb.

"In 1824 Captain Southcomb was lost at sea. I was put out with another man named Johnson—a white man, of course—in 1827.

"I endured great hardship while with him, for he treated me very cruelly. I stayed with him until 1835. He often came home drunk and abused me.

"Once he came home from the city, and being enraged at something that happened to him, he took revenge out of me. This time he locked me up in a smokehouse for an hour. It was in the month of August, and it was the hottest day that summer.

"He made a fire in the smokehouse. He called an old lame man named Stepmey and told him I was baking to death in the smokehouse. Then he opened the door and called for me to come out, but I didn't come out fast enough to please him.

"He had an idea that Mr. Stepmey would highly approve of his cruel act of me, but he didn't. Instead, Mr. Stepmey and Johnson got into an argument, Stepmey telling him he had no right to treat me in such a cruel manner. Mr. Stepmey, as a result of the argument, struck old man Johnson several blows, knocking him down.

"I was a small boy when I became free, and started out to make my own living. I have been with all kinds of people in my years, bad and good, with sailors, gamblers, thieves, and have been with the very best people in the world.

"In 1863 I came to Boston and enlisted to fill up the quota of Ward six under John S. Demerly. At that time I served in the Fifth cavalry. I am a member of Grand Army Post Robert Bell, whose headquarters are on Joy street.

"During the Civil War I served in the Bucktail regiment of Pennsylvania under Captain Taylor. I was with my regiment at the battle of Bull Run, I

During the National Negro Business league convention at Muskogee, Okla., it was stated that 2,000,000 Negroes living in Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas now have under their control, as owners and renters, about \$300,000,000 worth of farm property and own 60,000 farms, containing 6,000,000 acres of land, with farming implements worth \$200,000,000.

Eight million of the colored people of the South still live in the country districts, sometimes in the ratio of six or seven to one white man.

Steel water mains which have been in constant use at New Bedford, Mass., during the last 17 years, have recently been inspected and show evidence of a life of more than forty-five years before corrosion destroys them.

An apple tree owned by S. W. Alexander of Los Angeles, Cal., is exciting interest through the fact that, in the last year, it has had two crops, giving each time a different variety of apple.

J. B. Reed of Ithaca asserts he has trained rabbits to dig up and eat all the weeds in his garden without damaging valuable plants.

Two girls in Budapest who had decided to fight a duel over a young man with whom both were in love, have settled the matter by becoming engaged to the two men who volunteered to act as their seconds.

The Jordan is the world's most crooked river, wandering 213 miles to cover 60.

Virginia Only Producer of Rutile. The United States produced all the American output of rutile in 1913, according to the United States geological survey, the deposits being located at Roseland, Nelson county. During the year the company which controls and works these deposits produced 305 tons of rutile, valued at about forty-nine thousand dollars.

A large part of the rutile produced in 1913 was used in the manufacture of titanium carbide electrodes for arc lamps. A part of the ilmenite found

also at another time served with the Fifth Wisconsin regiment."

Mr. Allen pointed with pride to his uniform, musket and other war utensils, and said that when he died he will be buried in his full Grand Army uniform.

Mr. Allen does no work, living on the pension he receives, and he says it is quite enough, even in these hard times. He has a son and daughter living, Miss Rachel Allen and Jacob Allen.

Almost 5,000 young men and women, including 1,200 Indians, have already gone from Hampton institute into the South and West, equipped in body, mind, and heart to help their race get land; build better homes, schools, and churches; and improve social and economic conditions. Many of the Hampton students have literally reconstructed, in many places, the existing community life and have brought prosperity to men and women by helping them increase their earning power, and showing them how to use to the best advantage the resources at their doors.

Hampton institute aims to train Negroes and Indians to earn an honest living and serve unflinchingly and unselfishly their respective races. The best white people throughout the South and West testify that Hampton has realized its aims and that they are firm believers in the value of the so-called Hampton idea of education.

Hampton institute has set the pace for that form of vocational education which fits young people to work with skill and persistence, and also gives them a broad and sympathetic outlook on life. For 45 years under the efficient leadership of Gen. Samuel C. Armstrong and Dr. Hollis B. Frissell, Hampton institute has been training boys and girls for safe and sane leadership in business, in home-building, in improving church, home and social life throughout the South and West.

J. E. Thompson of Clearview, Okla., which is one of several prosperous Negro settlements, represents the idea of big business among Negroes. Thompson controls 5,000 acres of farm land; furnishes employment throughout the year for many members of his race; grows crops that are worth selling, and brings the market to his products; employs the methods of scientific farming, and preaches the doctrine of keep a pushing.

The son of a slave woman, he began at the age of thirteen to farm. Today, at the age of thirty-five, Thompson actually owns 1,300 acres. He raises mules, horses, hogs and cattle. This is in contrast to his condition in 1871, when he stood on the porch of a renter's hovel, and looking longingly at his sister into a garden full of mustard, sighed: "If we only had some meat, we could cook it in plenty of mustard."

Logan Morgan, who lives within four miles of Muskogee, Okla., finds that no color line is drawn in the market against his 12 and 14-ounce Alberta peaches, which bring \$2 a bushel in the orchard. His 21 years of experience in the Southwest have taught him the value of remaining quietly at work and of producing among other crops "peaches that can't be beat."

Morgan was married 20 years ago when he had only six bits and an \$18 pony. Now they own 1,400 acres of land.

A large, rich deposit of phosphate has been discovered in the valley of the Hausco river, about three hundred miles north of Valparaiso. Government engineers are preparing a report thereon, and it is believed to be of much importance, since the use of phosphate on the farm of Chile is increasing rapidly with good results.

A New York homeopath, speaking at the recent convention in Atlantic City, said that conserving the eyesight was a phase of health conservation often overlooked. He said that 50 per cent of the blindness in this country was due to conditions that might have been avoided.

According to figures published by the Monetary Times of Toronto, the sum total of American investments in Canada was \$636,904,000 in 1913, as compared with \$417,143,000 in 1911, and \$279,075,000 in 1909.

Eleven surveying parties will be sent out this year by the United States Geological Survey to investigate the mineral resources of Alaska.

The "safety first" idea which has recently come into general practice on most American roads is an old one in Germany and other European countries where the practice extends to every form of industry as well as the railroads.

There are 692 pawnbrokers' shops within a radius of ten miles from the Royal Exchange, London.

Egypt is adopting modern agricultural machinery after using the most primitive kinds for thousands of years.

In the deposits and separated by means of a magnetic separator has been sold for use in making electrodes for electric lights, and the experiments with the electric furnace point to the possible use of ilmenite in the direct production of tool steel.

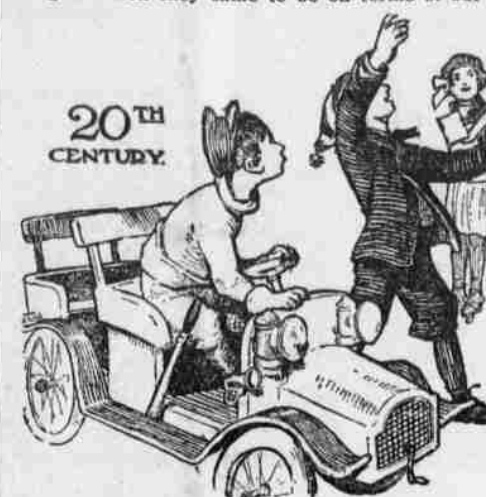
Odd and Even. His Wife—"I don't want you to be coming home at such odd hour." Husband—"All right, dear, I'll try to make it four instead of three."—Philadelphia Bulletin.

CHRISTMAS MILLESTONES in AMERICA

EVERY poor child of today has more in his Christmas stocking than the prosperous child dreamed of in the first century of white occupation of this country. Blase boys and girls who can hardly think of anything new for which to ask the generous saint can hardly conceive of the bareness of those early Christmas holidays.

In Massachusetts it was the worst of all, for keeping Christmas was denounced as a pernicious custom, and any child daring to think of as much as a plum pudding on that day would make himself liable to reproach by the authorities. All along the stern and rockbound coast the only Christmas trees in the days of the Puritan domination were those that nature had planted there and had adorned in December with fleecy snow. The fires burned brightly on the open hearths, but there was no invitation to the good saint to descend the chimney when the embers had burned low. As far as the children knew, Christmas was just like any other day in the calendar. Even after the Puritan reaction against the forms and customs of the old church had spent itself to some extent the children of the seventeenth century still expected no gifts in honor of the birthday of Christ.

In New Amsterdam the outlook was a little better for the children. The Hollanders had brought with them their St. Nicholas, and his birthday was celebrated joyously by young and old just before Christmas, but this day was kept, too, by the Protestant Dutch as heartily as any Catholics. Of course, they had not many real toys as we know them today, but in the shoes that the little Hollanders set by the fireplace in the shining kitchen, which was also the living room, were homemade sweets and cakes and homemade gifts. Many of these were of a useful character, such as hand-knit caps and mittens, but now and then a skillful Hollander would carve a model of a boat such as that which had brought them to New Amsterdam or a miniature chest of drawers, and one can fancy the recipients showing these with pride to the wondering little Indian boys and girls when they came to be on terms of su-



fluent amity with them for such conferences. In Virginia, where the Church of England was strong and its adherents steadfastly observed the holidays as in the home country, there was always more of the Christmas spirit and abundant cheer and merrymaking than elsewhere at this season. Here the Yule log held its place and here were the games and the feasting that made it indeed the merry season of the year. Later when New Amsterdam became New York and the English came into power the character of the Christmas holiday was changed again somewhat, although the Dutch influence continued dominant for many years.

Owing to the large number of Germans in Pennsylvania Christmas there partook largely of the nature of the festival in the fatherland. It was largely a family affair. The children for months before the day of the Nativity saved their pennies and bought material from which they fashioned their gifts for their mothers and for one another. These were presented on Christmas eve, and the next day the parents in turn spread out their presents for the children on a large table in the best room. Stockings were hung, too, and the good children had them filled with sweetmeats, pepper cakes and other goodies, but those who had been bad sometimes found a birch rod as a Christmas gift. There was one custom that was fraught with great terror to children. One Knecht Rupert went from house to house inquiring about the children on Christmas eve and recommending rewards or punishments according to the reports that he received of their conduct during the year. The Pennsylvania Santa Claus was popularly known as Kris Kringle, a corruption of Christ-Kindel, the little Christ.

Throughout the colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries toys were an almost unknown factor, but wherever Christmas observances were not frowned upon by religion feasting and good cheer were abundant, and bond and free, rich and poor, old and young shared in the games, abundant food and genial atmosphere. Not only did the munificence of those who were well supplied with worldly goods extend to their dependents and to all within reach of their charity, but in some places even the animals had an extra allowance of food to let them know that Christmas had come again.

In the eighteenth century toys began to make their appearance in the colonies. Some of them were brought from overseas and had the enchanting quality of novelty. Little girls who had helped to mother their younger brothers and sisters were delighted with dolls that were all their own to dress and undress, to fondle and cuddle, punish and reward. Simple and quaint were those early dolls, like the children they belonged to. One can fancy the surprise and terror of the timid when they first beheld a Jack jump into the air when an innocent looking box was opened. A toy was a thing to be cherished in those days. It was indeed a wondrous saint who could bring such things in his pack. Some of the gifts were of real intrinsic value, for the shipping and trading were growing to be important factors in the colonies, and men brought treasures of all kinds from the Far East to the seaports, whence they were distributed to other parts of the colonies. The war for independence interrupted this and the children shared in the self-sacrifices and de-

THE CHRISTMAS TREE

The tradition that trees and flowers blossomed on Christmas night is first quoted from an Arabian geographer of the tenth century. In the thirteenth century, in France, candles were seen on flowering trees. In England, Joseph of Arimathea's rod blossomed at Glastonbury and elsewhere. When September 3 became September 14 in 1752, 2,000 persons waited to see if the Quanton thorn would blow on Christmas, New Style; as it did not, they refused to keep the New Style festival.

The practice of using greenery in Christmas



17TH CENTURY

an automobile until the aeroplane, which he expects to have ready soon, is perfected. In any case, he carries automobiles of varying sizes for boys who long to run their own cars. How he ever gets them into the house is a mystery, for some of the delivery wagons and other machines are large enough to accommodate a good-sized boy.

There are so many things for girls nowadays that dolls do not occupy quite as important a place in the

Christmas stocking as at one time, yet there is nothing that quite takes their place in the affections of a real girl. And what stunning dolls they are today! Dolls that represent every phase of life, from baby dolls with their complete layettes to perfectly grown-up dolls with elaborate wardrobes and trunks to pack them away in. The handsomest and newest dolls come from a German studio. No two are alike, and they are real portrait dolls of North of Europe children in quaint costume. These lovely dolls cost \$14, but Santa Claus never counts the cost when he is going some place. An alluring boy will walk with you," and she does.

For the little children a woolly sheep used to be a delightful toy in the latter part of the last century, and when dogs and bears that would actually walk were found on Christmas morning there was a host of delighted admiration. Now there are lambs and dogs of life size and ponies as big as the real ones, and all sorts of large animals with the coats like the natural animal. They all walk and move about and act their parts perfectly.

Whatever father and mother have is duplicated for the children besides the thousand and one things that are devised especially for their amusement. All through the year the ingenious folk are working overtime in all the toy shops of the world to turn out the load for Santa Claus to carry to the fortunate children who look for him on Christmas eve, 1914.

CHRISTMAS REVELRY

A figure everywhere dominant in the celebration of Christmas in the middle ages was that of the Lord of Misrule, also called the Master of Merry Disports. In Scotland this same master of the revels was known as the Abbot of Unreason, while in France his title was very much the same—"Abbas Stultorum"—or Abbot of Fools. The king, the great lords of his realm and other important personages must needs appoint such a leader and organizer of their Christmas festivities. In Scotland, previous to the Reformation, the monasteries used to elect such a functionary, but in 1555 a law was passed for the suppression of the Abbot of Unreason, along with all the other burlesque and fantastic features of the Christmas celebration.

The barons and knights kept open house at Christmas time for a fortnight. Revelry reigned throughout this period, and on Christmas day the grand feast, given by the feudal chieftain to his friends and retainers, took place with great pomp and magnificence. The feast was heralded by a great blare of joyful trumpets. Borne on a gold or silver platter by the server at the head of a procession of nobles, knights and ladies, the foremost dish of the feast made the round of the hall to merry minstrelsy. When it was finally given its place rosemary and bay were spread around it, a pipkin was placed on its tusk and a mammoth pot of mustard close at hand.

The board's head was put down by act of parliament in the time of the commonwealth, and after that, although it was officially freed of the ban, it never quite recovered its former place as a part of the Christmas feast.

The peacock dish was next in importance to the board's head. This bird sometimes appeared at the board with all its feathers on and its beak gilded, its skin having been removed before cooking and carefully readjusted after it was ready for the table.

A FAMILY JAR.

"Providence intended me for a leader of fashion." "Providence intended you for a fool." "Well, whether Providence did or not you got me."

ONE.

"There never was a woman who didn't gab about her neighbors," growled Mrs. Gabb. "Oh, yes there was," replied Mrs. Gabb. "That's right," commented Mr. Gabb, "I forgot about Eve."

LINGUISTIC DIFFICULTY.

Frenchman—This impertinent Yankee slapped my face. Wife—Well, why don't you do something? Frenchman—How can I? I don't know how to talk English.—Le Rire.

by violence. At certain nights in the Christmas season lights, which no wind could extinguish, were seen moving in its branches.

Martin Luther is said to have brought in a snowy fir tree and put lights on its branches in his efforts to explain the beauty of a snow forest under a brilliant, starry sky to his wife and children.

There was also an ancient Egyptian practice of decking houses at the time of the winter solstice with branches of the date palm—"the symbol of life triumphant over death, and therefore of perennial life in the renewal of each bounteous year."